



Equality and Diversity Policy

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Author:	Kate Fallan
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Eko Trust an employer of choice - our principles

Eko Trust recognises that:

Only through a motivated, professional, well-developed workforce can the trust and its schools achieve the desired outcomes for children, staff and the communities the trust serves.

Eko Trust as an employer:

- Carries out its work in line with the trust values of 'Vitality, optimism, Integrity, Courage and Equity'.
- Will be one of choice for support and teaching staff.
- Promotes the Equality Duty as per the Equality Act 2010 with regard to the protected characteristics of race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment and marriage and civil partnership.
- Has 'due regard' when making decisions and developing policies, to the need to:
 1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
 2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
 3. Foster good relations across all protected characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Works to:
 1. Remove or minimise disadvantages.
 2. Takes steps to meet different needs.
 3. Encourage participation when it is disproportionately low.
- Does all it can to ensure that the wellbeing of staff is paramount and that staff are looked after. ● Will maintain proper standards of professionalism, integrity, conduct and concern for the public interest and the safeguarding and wellbeing of children.
- Ensures that teaching and support staff have access to regular, high quality learning and development opportunities to be the best they can be.
- Will support staff in fulfilling their ambition to provide the very best quality of education by enabling career progression and opportunities for staff to move upwards and sideways. Staff developing within our trust is integral to maintaining our high quality workforce.
- Participates in quality marks and awards that highlight the impactful work the trust does in valuing staff.
- Applies policies consistently and fairly.
- Operates safe working conditions.

INTRODUCTION

The Eko Trust is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants. The Trust aims to create a supportive and inclusive working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time following consultation. Elements of this procedure, including any time limits, may be varied as appropriate in any case.

1. DEFINITIONS

The term "Headteacher" also refers, where appropriate, to any other title used to identify the Headteacher. The role of the Headteacher will be taken by appropriate governors as indicated where the action being reviewed is that of the Headteacher.

The term "employee" refers to any member of the Trust staff employed to work at the Trust.

The term "staff" in this policy refers to all employees, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, casual workers, agency staff, governors and Trustees.

2. PURPOSE

The Eko Trust does not discriminate against staff on the basis of age; race; sex; disability; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; religion, faith or belief. (Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics). The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat visitors, volunteers, contractors and former staff members.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status. Please see the separate Bullying and Harassment policy for further details.

This policy sets out the Trust's expectations in respect of all aspects of its relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

The Eko Trust will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

3. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades within the Trust, including senior managers, employees, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, casual workers, agency staff and governors (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trust Board has ultimate responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy and the Senior Manager with responsibility for equalities issues has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law.

All leaders must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the Trust's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Staff will have access to appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

All members of staff are personally responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the policy and promote the Trust's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. In certain circumstances the Trust Board could be held to be vicariously liable for actions of their staff. Staff should be aware that they may be personally liable if they are found to have discriminated against another person at work or on Trust-related business.

The Trust Board will:

- Ensure that the equality information and objectives as set out in this statement are published and communicated throughout the Trust, including to staff, pupils and parents, and that they are reviewed and updated at least once every four years.
- Delegate responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives to the relevant headteacher and for Trust-wide objectives to the (Trust Leader of Culture and Development)
- Ensure the Senior Leaders of Trust schools meet with the Trust Leader for Culture and Development twice a year and/or as required and other relevant staff members, to discuss any issues and how these are being addressed and that these issues are recorded and communicated to the Trust Workforce Development Committee.
- Ensure Local Governing Bodies and the Trust Workforce Development Committee are familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this document.
- have access to the appropriate equality and diversity training
- Ensure it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made by considering the impact of significant decisions on particular groups.

Headteachers in Trust schools will:

- Promote knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives amongst staff and pupils.
- Aim to achieve their school objectives
- Monitor success in achieving the objectives and report back to Local Governing Bodies.

All school staff are expected to have regard to this document and to work to achieve the objectives as set out in section 8.

2. FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination is where there is a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular protected characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, a requirement to work full time adversely affects women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will be discriminatory unless it is objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in the Trust's Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint. Disability discrimination; this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

3. STAFF TRAINING, PROMOTION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation, and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit, following an internal advert as per the Recruitment Policy. Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

The conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

4. DISCIPLINE AND TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

The Trust will ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

The Trust will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

5. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

Staff are encouraged to inform the Trust if they are disabled or become disabled to ensure that the Trust can put in place the required and reasonable support.

Where difficulties arise at work as a result of disability, staff are encouraged to speak to their line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty.

The line manager is advised to consult with a medical professional through Occupational Health about possible adjustments. The matter will be considered carefully and attempts will be made to accommodate needs, wherever possible. If a particular adjustment is not considered to be reasonable, the Trust will explain its reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

The Trust will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, steps will be taken to improve access for disabled staff.

6. FIXED-TERM EMPLOYEES, CASUAL AND AGENCY WORKERS

The use of fixed-term employees, casual and agency workers is monitored, and their conditions of service, to ensure that staff are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. The Trust will, where relevant, monitor its progress to ensure that there are no barriers to staff accessing permanent vacancies.

7. PART TIME WORK

The Trust monitors the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. The Trust will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under the Trust's Flexible Working Policy.

8. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through the Trust's Grievance Policy. If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment or bullying you are encouraged to raise the matter through the Harassment and Bullying Policy.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Trust takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

9. INTRODUCTION

This document describes how the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies intend to fulfil their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty with regard to the workforce. The Equality Objectives and information will be published on the Trust's and schools' websites.

Schools and the Trust will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

10. INFORMATION

Schools and the Trust will collect and use equality information to help us to:

Identify key issues

- Understand the impact of policies, practices and decisions on people with different protected characteristics, and thereby plan them more effectively.
- Assess whether schools and the Trust are discriminating unlawfully when carrying out any of their functions.
- Identify what the key equality issues are for the organisations.

Assess performance

- Benchmark performance and processes against those of similar organisations, nationally or locally.

Take action

- Consider taking steps to meet the needs of staff who share relevant protected characteristics.
- Identify if there are any actions schools and the Trust can take to avoid discrimination and harassment, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.
- Make informed decisions about policies and practices which are based on evidence about the impact of activities on equality.
- Develop equality objectives to meet the specific duties.
- Have due regard to the aims of the general equality duty by ensuring that staff have appropriate information for decision-making.

The Trust will work towards developing an equality profile of staff to help us to understand key equality issues in the workforce, including any evidence of pay gaps or 'occupational segregation' i.e. staff with certain protected characteristics being over-represented in particular roles, for example, women as cleaners, or at certain grades.

In addition, the Trust notes that it is likely to be useful to collect and consider information, appropriately disaggregated, about:

- recruitment and promotion
- numbers of part-time and full-time staff
- pay and remuneration
- training

- return to work of women on maternity leave
- return to work of disabled employees following sick leave relating to their disability
- appraisals
- grievances (including about harassment)
- disciplinary action (including for harassment)
- dismissals and other reasons for leaving

11. PUBLICATION OF EQUALITY INFORMATION

We will comply with our statutory duties and aim to be transparent and open in the publishing of equality and diversity information across the Trust.